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Urchin Drag Season Changed and Seasonal Groundfish Closure Enacted

Effective October 1, two new regulations will effect commercial fishing in the Massachusetts Bay area. The Marine Fisheries Commission approved these changes at its September 7 meeting.

Urchin drag fishery season changed. The open season for taking green sea urchins with mobile gear was changed from October – January to November through February. This decision to shift the 4-month season was made to reduce the impacts to local lobster fisheries, especially in the areas of Salem and Marblehead Harbors where active lobster fisheries and urchin draggers have vied for limited fishing areas. In 1999, DMF postponed the urchin drag opening until November 1 after receiving reports of molting and new-shelled lobsters in the prime urchin areas. To mitigate the impacts on the urchin draggers, the drag season was extended for one month to include the month of February.

Regulations pertaining to SCUBA divers remain unchanged with an 8-month open season from September 1 through April 30.

October-November groundfish closure enacted to complement existing federal rules.

Commercial fishing with bottom trawls, gillnets, longline, rod-and-reel, or handline is prohibited during October 1 – November 30 in an area that extends north of 42 degrees latitude (off Plymouth) to 42 degrees 30 minutes latitude (off Marblehead). This action complements federal Gulf of Maine Rolling Closure V. This state action impacts commercial fishermen who have only state permits –vessels with federal permits are already prohibited from fishing in these and adjacent federal waters during these two months.

For further information contact David Pierce (ext. 142) or Daniel McKiernan (ext. 132) at DMF's Pocasset office (508)563-1779.